

REMARKS

The Official Action mailed March 17, 2003, has been received and its contents carefully noted. Filed concurrently herewith is a *Request for Two Month Extension of Time*, which extends the shortened statutory period for response to August 17, 2003. Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully submits that this response is being timely filed.

The Applicant notes with appreciation the consideration of the Information Disclosure Statements filed on February 20, 1996, December 11, 1997, and August 13, 2002. However, the Applicant has not received acknowledgment of the Information Disclosure Statement filed on December 28, 1999. The Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner provide an initialed copy of the Form PTO-1449 evidencing consideration of the above-referenced Information Disclosure Statement.

Claims 1-59 were pending in the present application prior to the above amendment. Claims 5, 8, 9, 19, 22, 29, 31 and 33 have been canceled, and claims 7, 10, 11, 13, 15, 21, 23, 30, 32, 37-43, 45, 46, 48-50, 52, 53, 55, 56 and 58 have been amended. Specifically, claims 7, 10, 21, 33, 38, 41-43, 45 and 46 were objected to as being dependent upon rejected base claims, and claims 7, 10, 21, 41, 43, 45 and 46 have been rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claims. Claims 15, 23, 39 and 40 have been amended to correct minor typographical and grammatical errors. Claims 11, 13, 30, 32, 37-40, 42, 48-50, 52, 53, 55, 56 and 58 have been amended so that they depend from an allowable independent claim. Accordingly, claims 1-4, 6, 7, 10-18, 20, 21, 23-28, 30, 32 and 34-59 are now pending in the present application, of which claims 1, 7, 10, 15, 21, 23, 33, 36, 41, 43, 45 and 46 are independent. For the reasons set forth in detail below, all claims are believed to be in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration is requested. The Applicant notes with appreciation the allowance of claims 1-4, 6, 14-18, 20, 23-28, 36-39, 44, 47, 51, 54, 57 and 59.

The Official Action rejects claims 8, 19, 22, 29, 30, 48, 49, 52, 53 and 55 as obvious based on the combination of JP 2-143572 to Koji and U.S. Patent No.

4,862,237 to Morozumi. The Official Action further rejects claims 5, 9, 11-13, 31, 32, 34-35, 40, 48, 50, 56 and 58 as obvious based on the combination of Koji, Morozumi, and U.S. Patent 5,250,932 to Misawa et al. In response, the Applicant has canceled claims 5, 8, 9, 19, 22, 29, 31 and 33, and the remaining dependent claims have been amended to depend from allowable independent claims. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the obviousness rejections are moot, and all pending claims are believed to be in condition for allowance.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,


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